

## **DESPONDENTLY POOR WITH BLEAK FUTURE**

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By Terrance M. Booysen

As is the case with so many developing countries across the world, poverty is a matter which is discussed as a growing crisis by heads of state, business leaders and civic groups; but the trends of poverty continue to rise. Whilst poverty has been described as a 'silent killer' amongst the poor, its visible effects have the most bearing upon children who suffer from undernutrition and who are the greatest victims of this socio-economic crime. According to a paper produced in 2013 by Black et al, it was estimated that circa 3 million children die annually\*, mostly as a result of undernutrition.

Indeed, as millions of homeless children from low and middle income countries suffer from malnutrition, the effects of diarrhea or a common cold, but certainly any contagious disease such as measles or malaria, is exacerbated by their vulnerable immune systems. Black et al believe that undernutrition is the underlying cause for many deaths in children; their research suggests similar findings for deaths related to diarrhea (61%), malaria (57%), pneumonia (52%) and measles (45%).



Disabled children at ADM receive their  
Teddy Bears to brighten their day

As one then considers the undernutrition findings of Black et al, South Africa's gini co-efficient rankings of 65% does not help matters, and places the country as the second worst index of poverty levels in the world. Making matters worse, about a quarter of our population are unemployed and according to UNAIDS, about a third of South Africa's fifty three million people live on less than \$2 a day. This bleak picture is most certainly not going to improve anytime soon, particularly considering that South Africa trails far behind our BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) counterparts in poverty and GDP (Gross Domestic Product) rankings.

Given these circumstances, the call to assist the poorest of poor has never been so critical -- and so needed -- as it is today. And 'yes', while many corporates continue to demonstrate their concern for the less fortunate, which is clearly evident when one reads about their financial support within their annual integrated reports, the problems associated to poverty are not improving in the grand scheme. Somehow more needs to be done to lift the plight of the poor; and whilst it is easy to apportion blame on government, in reality the problem goes well beyond government itself. Leaving the poverty problem to government alone simply prolongs the inevitable - this is a societal issue. In order to avoid a major catastrophe, our mindsets will most certainly need to radically change. Insular thinking, or sporadic donations and trying to 'wish the problem away' is not the sort of mindset change we are seeking. Indeed, to address the issues of poverty and its associated social ills will require all working citizens, and their employers, to seriously apply their minds to finding lasting solutions that are intentionally built into their organisation's strategies.

In its simplest of form, organisations can arrange visits to call upon recognised non-profit organisations (NPOs) in order to get a perspective of the dire situation which so many NPO's are dealing with on a daily basis. However, larger organisations who are more reliant upon surrounding communities with a greater impact upon society, should align their corporate social responsibility programmes with the objectives found within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In following this approach, the collective behaviour

amongst the corporates, supported by various international accords, will ensure a greater impact to stem the tide on poverty, instead of haphazard efforts which often result in project overlaps and 'donation leakage' which does not benefit the intended beneficiaries.

As a part of CGF Research Institute's ('CGF') efforts to assist impoverished communities in South Africa, our company realised the importance of understanding the plight of the poor. Whilst CGF may have initially only had a superficial understanding of poverty through the knowledge gained via television and other mediums of the media; our first-hand experience and renewed understanding only occurred when we actually began visiting the NGOs dealing with the poor. Expectedly, our perspectives changed instantly as the harsh realities of the stark contrasts between the 'have's and the have nots' struck home. At the same time, we also realised that our own efforts -- whilst very much appreciated by the beneficiaries -- was only 'a drop in the ocean'. This is when CGF changed its CSI (Corporate Social Investment) approach. We began partnering with various NGOs to bolster our efforts in an effort to positively increase our impact upon the poor.

In one of CGF's CSI programmes, supported by Wot-If? Trust, CGF seeks out registered NPOs where impoverished children are involved. Through Wot-If? Trust, CGF is provided Teddy Bears which are a donation from Big Five Duty Free. Big Five Duty Free encourage travelers at all major South African Airports to buy the Teddy Bears and leave them behind in large bins and these are then donated to those less fortunate. As the batches of Teddy Bears are delivered to CGF, we then go in search for NPOs with needy children, in order to add a little spark of joy to their day.

Whilst the initial purpose of CGF is to deliver the Teddy Bears to the children, in reality we have a greater objective. So often, only the larger and more 'visible' NPOs -- who have structured marketing campaigns -- are recognised by the corporates, and these NPOs are usually the first to be assisted with various forms of financial aid. Expectedly, the smaller registered NPOs are generally overlooked, and it for this reason that CGF specifically targets this segment of NPOs. In doing this, through CGF's wide reach within the corporate and government communities, we encourage the donors to consider splitting their existing CSI investment monies amongst the smaller NPOs. Accordingly, when CGF visits a new NPO beneficiary, we try and sketch some of the information about the NPO and their basic requirements; each time with the hope that a prospective donor will include the NPO as a new beneficiary of their time and investment.

### **Alexandra Disability Movement (Fund Raising No.006-192 NPO) (Alexandra)**

Recently, the Noordien Foundation introduced CGF to the Alexandra Disability Movement (ADM), where we met their CEO, Mr. Jerry Ntimbane. ADM was formed in 1991 to create protective employment workshops for the disabled through income generating projects. Whilst ADM's employment workshops are in much need of support, where five of the ADM beneficiaries have the ability to assist companies to package their small goods as a form of causal work, the remaining thirty-nine young children at ADM are mentally impaired and they are completely dependent on the home for shelter, care and support.

ADM's run-down facilities are found in Alexandra; it is clearly evident that their dwindling funds which they receive through a small monthly government grant, as well as from a few sponsors, is applied mostly to the sustenance of the children. The home accepts disabled and mentally handicapped children from the ages of two years, up to young adults of 20 years of age. The residents of ADM are provided lodging, basic stimulation, as well as various forms of physiotherapy; speech therapy and sign language. Whilst each case

of the children is a sad affair, when visiting ADM there is a strong sense of unity, and these incredible people support and encourage one another through each day with song and praise.

On our tour of ADM, we observed the following immediate needs (in no order of importance):

1. an external steel staircase which needs to be converted into a ramp to assist moving the disabled children between the first and second floors of the building;
2. heating for the girl's and boy's dormitories;
3. renovations to the bathrooms to assist the disabled children to bath safely (with the assistance of their caregivers);
4. painting of the building (externally and internally);
5. repairs to ceilings;
6. equipment to stimulate the disabled;
7. safe toys and clothes; and
8. food.



Staircase not designed to cater for disabled children

Indeed, besides the above, we are aware that the government's social grants are not paid to the ADM on a reliant, nor regular basis and therefore funding -- particularly for disabled people -- is always a major challenge. Without finance, a home such as ADM cannot function, and the children will always be the first to bear the brunt of the cold winters, not least also enjoying a nutritious meal. At the time of writing this article -- where Gauteng enters the grip of winter -- ADM have a mounting water and electricity bill which runs into the tens of thousands of rands. Cutting these basic services (which occurs frequently), leaves the ADM and its occupants in an unbearable situation.

If you are able to assist ADM with any of these items, please contact Mr. Jerry Ntimbane on 011 882 1147 or email: [disabilitymovement@iburst.co.za](mailto:disabilitymovement@iburst.co.za)

It is appropriate to reflect upon the sobering words of the former President Nelson Mandela who said at the launch of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, *"there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children."* [May 08, 1995]

\*Source: Maternal and child undernutrition and overweight in low-income and middle-income countries (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23746772>)

**ENDS**

Words: 1,814

### **About Wot-If? Trust**

Wot-If? Trust operates primarily in Diepsloot, working on Socio-Economic and Enterprise Development Initiatives. Their focus is on helping emerging and small enterprises to grow and become sustainable and giving the youth hope and opportunities for the future. Agriculture, business, technology, innovation and media are key drivers, specifically on how these impact on improving lives and the Diepsloot community in general.

For further information, please contact: Gail Styger (Wot-If? Trust: Founder & Trustee) 083 625 3929 or email [gail@wot-if.co.za](mailto:gail@wot-if.co.za)

### **About Noordien Foundation**

The Nicole Noordien Foundation (NNF) is a non-profit organisation focusing on the upliftment and empowerment of abused women and children in South Africa and neighbouring SADC regions. The Nicole Noordien Foundation has a long term vision and mission for the rehabilitation, upskilling, upliftment and reintroduction of powerful women who have been disenfranchised, not only due to previous disadvantages, but also due to modern vulnerability. We believe that there is plenty that can be done, but nothing should be added before what already exists has been effectively understood and fixed.

The Nicole Noordien Foundation aims to intervene in domestic violence situations, to re-integrate survivors and their children back into the social environment that is conducive to supporting their very real needs. Where re-integration fails, we strive to escalate the matter to the correct authorities. Data assimilated from our work will be utilised for statistical records.

For further information, please contact: Nicole Noordien de Klerk (Noordien Foundation: Founder) 011 326 6788 / 079 679 2014 or email [n.noordien@icloud.com](mailto:n.noordien@icloud.com)

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